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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /059 W
---------- 058525
R 181016Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9371
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 2477

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FI
SUBJECT: OUTLOOK FOR NEW FINNISH GOVERNMENT STILL CLOUDY

REF: HELSINKI 2338

1. SUMMARY: FIRST TWO WEEKS OF FORMER GOVERNOR MIETTUNEN'S EFFORTS TO FORM A NEW MAJORITY GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN SPENT ON SOUNDING OUT FIVE PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN NEGOTIATIONS. MIETTUNEN HAS NOW COME UP WITH HIS -OWN" COMPREHENSIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM AND IS DEMANDING YES OR NO ANSWERS FROM THE PARTIES BY NOVEMBER 20. IT IS LIKELY THAT PARTIES WILL DEFER DECISION TO THEIR EXECU-TIVE ORGANS, SOME OF WHICH SCHEDULED TO MEET SHORTLY AFTER DEADLINE. GENERAL EXPECTATION IS THAT COMMUNISTS WILL DROP OUT OF NEGOTIATIONS. POSITION OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS UNCLEAR, BUT CRUCIAL TO MAJORITY GOVERN-MENT BEING FORMED. MIETTUNEN WILL TRY FOR FOUR-PARTY COALITION IF COMMUNISTS BOW OUT. TIME SPENT ON TRYING TO FORM NEW MAJORITY GOVERNMENT WILL SET NEW RECORD IN TWO WEEKS, AND OUTLOOK FOR ONE BEING FORMED SOON NOT CONSIDERED PROMISING -- WITH "OUTSIDE" DATE HAVING SLIPPED FROM FEBRUARY TO AUTUMN 1976.
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END SUMMARY.

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2. FORMER GOVERNOR OF LAPLAND PROVINCE, MARTTI MIETTUNEN, STARTED HIS ATTEMPT TO FORM A NEW MAJORITY PARLIAMENT-BASED GOVERNMENT ON NOVEMBER 3 BY SETTING UP A WORKING GROUP CONSISTING OF PARTY SECRETARIES FROM THE FIVE PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN NEGOTIATIONS, COMMUNIST, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC, CENTER, LIBERAL AND SWEDISH PARTIES.

3. FIRST WEEK WAS SPENT ON HEARING EXPERTS FROM VARIOUS MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS, AS WELL AS INTERNAL DISCUSSION OF GENERAL NATURE WITHIN GROUP. AT BEGINNING OF SECOND WEEK, NOVEMBER 10, MIETTUNEN CAME UP WITH A TEN PAGE PRELIMINARY GOVERNMENT PROGRAM. WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT PARTY SECRETARIES DID NOT HAVE AUTHORITY TO DECIDE, MIETTUNEN CALLED IN FIRST THE LARGER NEGOTIATING GROUPS FROM ALL PARTIES AND THEN THE PARTY CHAIRMEN.

4. MIETTUNEN ALSO ASKED EACH PARTY TO SPECIFY ITS "THRESHOLD" POINTS, THAT IS THOSE POINTS THAT ANY PARTY CONSIDERED VITAL FOR ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT. COMMUNISTS STUCK TO LOOSE FORMULATIONS DEMANDING BASIC CHANGES IN THE PROPOSED BUDGET AND OVER-ALL ECONOMIC POLICY. ALTHOUGH NOT COMPLETELY CLOSING THE DOOR ON THEIR GOING INTO THE GOVERNMENT, THE COMMUNISTS ARE CONSIDERED TO HAVE GIVEN NEGATIVE SIGNALS AND SET UP AN EXCUSE FOR STAYING OUT. SOCIAL DEMOCRATS PRESENTED A SEVEN-POINT PROGRAM WHICH WAS LARGELY A REHASH OF THEIR ELECTION CAMPAIGN PLATFORM IN SOME-WHAT CONDENSED FORMAT, AND ALSO MADE THEIR DEMANDS PUBLIC. CENTRIST PARTIES (CENTER, LIBERAL, AND SWEDISH) DID NOT MAKE THEIR LIST PUBLIC, BUT LEAKS INDICATE THAT THEY TOO BASICALLY RESORTED TO REENUMERATING PREVIOUS DEMANDS. THERE HAS BEEN SOME CRITICISM FROM WITHIN BOTH THE SWEDISH AND CENTER PARTIES THAT CENTER PARTY CHAIRMAN VIROLAINEN WAS GOING TOO FAR IN TRYING TO MEET COMMUNIST DEMANDS. NEVERTHELESS, GENERAL IMPRESSION IS THAT THE ANSWERS TO MIETTUNEN FROM THE PARTIES DO NOT REPRESENT ANY REAL PROGRESS ON THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM DILEMMA WHEN COMPARED WITH SPEAKER
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OF PARLIAMENT SUKSELAINEN'S EARLIER ATTEMPT.

5. MIETTUNEN THEN INFORMED PRESIDENT KEKKONEN OF THE SITUATION. KEKKONEN TOLD HIM TO TRY TO DETERMINE QUICKLY WHETHER ANY BASIS EXISTED FOR FORMING A FIVE-PARTY POPULAR FRONT GOVERNMENT, AND IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A NEW POLITICAL GOVERNMENT BY DECEMBER 5, THE DAY BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

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DAY. MIETTUNEN TOLD THE NEWSPAPERS THAT UNFORTUNATELY HIS OWN DEADLINE OF THE END OF NOVEMBER APPEARED IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET, BUT THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TRYING. MIETTUNEN ALSO STATED THAT IF A FIVE-PARTY GOVERNMENT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE, I.E., IF THE COMMUNISTS DROPPED OUT, HE WOULD TRY TO FORM A FOUR-PARTY GOVERNMENT. HE HAS NOT TAKEN ANY PUBLIC POSITION ON WHETHER HE WILL TRY FOR A CENTRIST MINORITY GOVERNMENT IF BOTH COMMUNISTS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS DROP OUT, AND IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER HIS MANDATE FROM KEKKONEN CAN BE CONSIDERED TO INCLUDE THIS OPTION.

6. MIETTUNEN IS STILL KEEPING INITIATIVE IN HIS OWN HANDS, AND HAS NOW MOVED TO THE ATTACK. TODAY, NOV 17, MIETTUNEN PRESENTED HIS "OWN" FIFTEEN PAGE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM TO THE PARTY SECRETARIES. HE WILL ALSO MEET WITH THE PARTY CHAIRMEN THIS AFTERNOON. THAT WILL BE THE LAST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PARTIES TO SUGGEST CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO MIETTUNEN'S PROGRAM. AFTER THIS THE PARTIES WILL HAVE UNTIL SIX P.M. ON NOVEMBER 20 TO GIVE MIETTUNEN A "YES OR NO" ANSWER ON WHETHER THEY ACCEPT HIS PROGRAM. IT IS EXPECTED THAT MOST PARTIES WILL NOT COMMIT THEMSELVES SO SOON AND THAT THEIR ANSWERS WILL BE IN THE FORM THAT THEY WILL EITHER RECOMMEND ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION TO THEIR PARTY GOVERNING BODIES -- SEVERAL OF WHICH ARE MEETING NOVEMBER 22-24.

7. IF ALL PARTIES ACCEPT MIETTUNEN'S PROGRAM, THE NEXT STEP WILL BE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT, I.E., WHO GETS WHICH MINISTRY. GENERAL EXPECTATION IS, HOWEVER, THAT COMMUNISTS WILL REJECT MIETTUNEN PROGRAM. IF SO, NEXT QUESTION WILL CONFIDENTIAL

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BE WHETHER OR NOT SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ACCEPT AND AT WHAT PRICE -- FINALD PROGRAM POINTS AND MINISTERSHIPS (POSSIBLY DEMANDING PRIME MINISTER POSITION). THE CENTRIST PARTIES ARE MOST LIKELY TO ACCEPT MIETTUNEN PROGRAM, BUT THEY TOO MAY WELL DEFER FINAL DECISION TO PARTY COUNCILS.

8. OUTLOOK FOR FORMATION OF A VIABLE MAJORITY POLITICAL GOVERNMENT SOON IS STILL NOT PROMISING. IN TWO WEEKS A NEW RECORD WILL BE SET FOR THE TIME NEEDED TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. WHEREAS THERE PREVIOUSLY WAS TALK ABOUT FEBRUARY 1976 AS AN OUTSIDE DATE FOR THE NEW MAJORITY GOVERNMENT, AN EVEN LATER DATE -- THE AUTUMN OF 1976 AFTER THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, IS MENTIONED MORE AND MORE FREQUENTLY.

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